

THE LAST OF ITS KIND

AND THE PLACE THAT NOW KNOWS
IT SHALL KNOW IT NO MORE.

The Old House That Has Stood for More
Than a Hundred Years Glows Way to
the March of Progress.

It is a melancholy sight to witness the fall of a great tree, whether it be from the effects of age or at the hands of the destroying axe. It is perhaps a sadder thing to see removed, little by little an ancient structure around which the memories of years linger, and which in its day and generation illustrated the civilization of a period now gone forever; and which will never more be revived, nor can ever be entirely understood. For more than a hundred years there has been standing on the north side of Franklin street at the corner of Adams, a noble specimen of colonial architecture. It is one of the last of its kind. Its history, and the record of those who for generations have lived under its roof, would fill a volume. And although this cannot be given here, something may be said as to how it came to be built, and to identify the spot where it once stood, after the place that now knows it shall know it no more.

Before the beginning of the present century, Mr. Thomas Rutherford came to Virginia, and settled at Richmond. He was an enterprising young Scotch gentleman, who had already left his native town of Glasgow, to engage in mercantile pursuits at Dublin, where he was sent as a supernumerary to James River. In the latter capacity he was detained in Virginia for many months settling up the business entrusted to his care.

While here thus engaged, he formed such an opinion of the people and climate that he made up his mind to become a citizen of the United States. About the year 1788 Mr. Rutherford arrived at Richmond to begin a long and useful career; and to found in this country a family whose influence should extend all this time, been for good in the community of which they were a part, and many of whom have filled important places in social, as well as in public life.

In due time Mr. Rutherford became a successful merchant; married into one of the prominent families of the State, and was, at the time of which we now write, living in a small, unpretentious house on "E" or Main street as it was afterwards called, near the County Court House, and east of Shockoe Creek.

This was the original site of the "Old House," which was occupied by the best class of people. The air of the place was not salubrious. Its location was flat, and always wet by the over-flowing of the river and creek. Much trouble was suffered from the dampness of the place.

Mr. Rutherford had already lost several members of his family and with some of his neighboring sufferers, was obliged to seek safety from disease in the purer air of the upper country. A favorite place of resort at that time was the "Old House" in Louisa county. It was during the summer of 1793 that he first went to that place. There he knew he would meet agreeable and refined people from Richmond, and many of the proprietors of estates from the malarial districts of James River.

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Finding it necessary to remove his family from the town, at the return of every summer, Mr. Rutherford had already determined to secure a more wholesome place of residence somewhere west of Shockoe Creek and upon a higher elevation. He had become familiar with all the country west of the town, and had set his mind on an elevated and pleasant situated place of land within easy reach by vehicle or horseback of the warehouses when the traffic in tobacco was at its height, and the city lying beyond what is now Second street, and stretching indefinitely westward, composed part of the property here referred to. Almost everybody for several generations gone, have heard of Parson Blair and Parson Buchanan.

The latter had two brothers, both of whom were successful Scotch merchants, and had become men of means. They owned large areas of land in several parts of the country, but particularly near the town of Richmond. Parson Buchanan, being a minister, had never desired or tried to accumulate money, and consequently was poor until one of his brothers died leaving him considerable land property, lying at the upper end of Broad street, then Deep-run present shops of the area in which the "Old House" stood. Parson Buchanan, together with that on which the "Hermione" "Heliote," "Columbia" and other noted family mansions were subsequently built.

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Of course there was no gas, and it was a joy to the night-walker when the light from some distant window shed its brightness athwart the universal gloom to cheer his way. The family cur was then a prominent personage, whose functions were not to be despised. Insects were frequent in which had hove were made upon the persons and clothing of wayfarers by night. One gentleman had his fashionable blue cloth cloak torn to pieces, while a package of oranges in a wicker basket was scattered all over the snow instead of being enjoyed by the family. Another had his new umbrella beaten to fragments defending himself, and being greatly incensed thereby, returned in haste to the spot and slew the offending brutes.

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By the 1st of December, 1796, the dwelling house, two out-houses of brick, 90 by 20 feet each, two stories high, and a large brick stable were under roof. In the spring of 1796, Mr. Rutherford brought his family up to their new home, but occupied one of the out-houses, until November, 1796, which was moved into the main dwelling then completed.

As part of the history of the times, it may be proper to state here that his large family mansion, 52 feet front, by 40 feet in depth, with all the out-houses and stables, cost the family not only \$11,000. For many years after he had occupied his new home Mr. Rutherford kept enclosed all the land south of the dwelling as far as Main street, his lease being for 99 years. It was this large tract of land which he sold to the city of Richmond for \$100,000. It was well, for the sake of history to describe here this typical example of a patriarchal home of the day. It occupied an extensive tract of land, and was divided into lawns, kitchen and flower gardens, orchard, and vineyard. As time passed these became more and more circumscribed. The proprietor found it to his advantage to invest in the city, and the street was opened, and cross streets arranged for public convenience. The property was afterwards known as "Rutherford's Addition" and became attractive to investors and builders. The gentleman followed Mr. Rutherford's example. The Paces, Mr. J. A. Chevalier, Mr. Wilson, Major Price, the Cummings, and other soon supplied a neighborhood of agreeable residents upon lots in that region. Many were the improvements made before this was accomplished. The face of the country had to be much changed. On Franklin street between First and Foushee was a deep swampy level, generally filled with water, through which people had to wade in the cold. A rugged pathway of thistle and other undergrowth represented First street as it climbed up a gravelly hillside to what is now known as Laiden square. A mass of trees and shrubs, many acres west of First street, occupied by orchards of every variety of fruit known at that day. Many of these are now never seen; and others have so degenerated that they are not cultivated.

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On the occasion of Mr. Rutherford's visit to the Green Springs, he made an ineffectual effort to purchase from Parson Buchanan this very property. The good man would have been glad to accommodate him, but he had no land, sons for declining to sell. Whereupon his brother Alexander, observing the disappointment of Mr. Rutherford, at once offered him a hundred acres of the own land lying nearer to the town than the parson's, and upon such liberal terms that Mr. Rutherford at once closed the bargain. To these hundred acres, Mr. Alexander Buchanan afterwards added "certain other lots adjoining it without additional price."

No Franklin Street Then.

When Mr. Rutherford made this purchase, there was no Franklin street. Carriage-ways traversed the country in every direction over the grassy fields. But few dwellings were to be seen. There were neither streets nor foot-paths. It displayed a democratic purpose to seek its own level, whether water or mud or dust. Cattle grazed at large or dozed peacefully in the neighborhood. Here, however, the old and primitive fencing interfered with the common freedom of things. The sun gave his light by day, but when night came, unless the moon was in fashion, nothing guided than from stumbling over the backs of drowsy cattle, or falling into sloughs of mire, but the light of the family lamp.

Of course there was no gas, and it was a joy to the night-walker when the light from some distant window shed its brightness athwart the universal gloom to cheer his way. The family cur was then a prominent personage, whose functions were not to be despised. Insects were frequent in which had hove were made upon the persons and clothing of wayfarers by night. One gentleman had his fashionable blue cloth cloak torn to pieces, while a package of oranges in a wicker basket was scattered all over the snow instead of being enjoyed by the family. Another had his new umbrella beaten to fragments defending himself, and being greatly incensed thereby, returned in haste to the spot and slew the offending brutes.

No sooner had Mr. Rutherford consummated his purchase than he began to prepare for his new home. After due inspection of the locality he determined to erect the "Old House" on the highest possible point. He wanted fresh air and a good view. To do this it would have been necessary to put the house in the middle of what is now Franklin street, then a common carriage road. The land sloped away from this point in every direction, and it was with difficulty that he was finally dissuaded by his friends from carrying out his purpose. They foresaw that in time the country-road would become a street, and that the house and premises would be a serious barrier to the growth of the town in that direction. Had he carried out the plan the present fashionable thorough-

fare would have been obstructed by the large brick mansion, lately occupied by Col. A. S. Buford, and now being demolished for the erection of a block of modern dwellings.

Began to Build.

Having heeded the protest of his friends, Mr. Rutherford began the new residence by excavating the foundation in the winter of 1794. Early in the following spring he made the brick from clay on the spot, and proceeded to burn oyster-shells for lime. Houses were not run up in a month in those days. It was a serious and important undertaking then. People build as if they were houses were never to be destroyed; were never to become a prey to the march of improvement, or disappear at the demands of progress.

By the 1st of December, 1796, the dwelling house, two out-houses of brick, 90 by 20 feet each, two stories high, and a large brick stable were under roof. In the spring of 1796, Mr. Rutherford brought his family up to their new home, but occupied one of the out-houses, until November, 1796, which was moved into the main dwelling then completed.

As part of the history of the times, it may be proper to state here that his large family mansion, 52 feet front, by 40 feet in depth, with all the out-houses and stables, cost the family not only \$11,000. For many years after he had occupied his new home Mr. Rutherford kept enclosed all the land south of the dwelling as far as Main street, his lease being for 99 years. It was this large tract of land which he sold to the city of Richmond for \$100,000. It was well, for the sake of history to describe here this typical example of a patriarchal home of the day. It occupied an extensive tract of land, and was divided into lawns, kitchen and flower gardens, orchard, and vineyard. As time passed these became more and more circumscribed. The proprietor found it to his advantage to invest in the city, and the street was opened, and cross streets arranged for public convenience. The property was afterwards known as "Rutherford's Addition" and became attractive to investors and builders. The gentleman followed Mr. Rutherford's example. The Paces, Mr. J. A. Chevalier, Mr. Wilson, Major Price, the Cummings, and other soon supplied a neighborhood of agreeable residents upon lots in that region. Many were the improvements made before this was accomplished. The face of the country had to be much changed. On Franklin street between First and Foushee was a deep swampy level, generally filled with water, through which people had to wade in the cold. A rugged pathway of thistle and other undergrowth represented First street as it climbed up a gravelly hillside to what is now known as Laiden square. A mass of trees and shrubs, many acres west of First street, occupied by orchards of every variety of fruit known at that day. Many of these are now never seen; and others have so degenerated that they are not cultivated.

This was the original site of the "Old House," which was occupied by the best class of people. The air of the place was not salubrious. Its location was flat, and always wet by the over-flowing of the river and creek. Much trouble was suffered from the dampness of the place.

Mr. Rutherford had already lost several members of his family and with some of his neighboring sufferers, was obliged to seek safety from disease in the purer air of the upper country. A favorite place of resort at that time was the "Old House" in Louisa county. It was during the summer of 1793 that he first went to that place. There he knew he would meet agreeable and refined people from Richmond, and many of the proprietors of estates from the malarial districts of James River.

Necessary to Move.